



# SOLDIER SPOTLIGHT

**U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS**

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## **U.S. Army Reserve lieutenant colonel is 2X the citizen**

KANDAHAR AIRFIELD, Afghanistan – The U.S. Army Reserve is composed of approximately 200,000 Citizen-Soldiers who mostly combine part-time military duty with a separate, full-time civilian career. Reserve Soldiers can, however, assume active duty status for such events as annual training or deployment to overseas contingency operations. Since its beginning in 1908, American Citizen-Soldiers have paused from their usual jobs, temporarily left their families and answered the nation's call to duty. Over the years, the reserve force has adapted to meet the needs of the United States and the American people. Today, the Army Reserve makes up only 20 percent of the Army's organized units, but provides half of the Army's combat support and a quarter of the Army's total resources- human capital, facilities, and materiel combined- all that at just 5.3 percent of the Army's budget.

Over the course of nearly 30 years, U.S. Army Reserve Lt. Col. Clifford A. Conklin has built a rock-solid Army Reserve and civilian career in engineering. He currently serves as the Helmand Area Office officer in charge with the Afghanistan Engineer District-South, part of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. He shares his perspective here:



*U.S. Army Reserve Lt. Col. Clifford A. Conklin has built a rock-solid Army Reserve and civilian career in engineering. He currently serves as the Helmand Area Office officer in charge with the Afghanistan Engineer District-South, part of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. (USACE photo by JC Delgadillo)*

### ***Name, Rank and Unit:***

Lt. Col. Clifford A. Conklin, Afghanistan Engineer District-South

### ***Military Occupation:***

Engineer Officer

### ***Civilian Occupation:***

Senior project manager for a firm that provides architecture, engineering, planning, and construction services, with a focus on Intelligent Transportation Systems as it pertains to roads, highways and bridges.

### ***Why did you join the Army Reserve?***

I enlisted in 1985 to help pay for college and to leverage experience gained in the military toward a job in forestry. After going through ROTC and following graduation I was commissioned as an engineer officer, which I thought would also aid my civilian career. Ultimately though, I really just had a deep desire to serve.

### ***What are some of the challenges and benefits of serving in the Army Reserve?***

It's expected that Army Reserve Soldiers will know how to do their military jobs despite only having one weekend's

worth of training per month and short-term annual training while maintaining a civilian career. Active duty soldiers

on the other hand do not have a civilian career to manage and can train more frequently. Finding time to conduct and maintain physical fitness requires the use of personal time that could otherwise be spent working on your civilian career or with family and friends. It can be tough to balance your civilian job and your military careers since some civilian employers do not understand the time commitment involved with a military career. This can pressure you to work solely on your civilian career since that's the job that pays the bills month to month. But the benefits of serving are life-enhancing. The experiences, the friendships, the travel, the opportunities to do things not normally done in the civilian world are outstanding. I have many friends that I keep in close contact with from my earliest days as a Soldier to newer friends I've made over the course of my mobilizations and deployments.



*U.S. Army Reserve Lt. Col. Clifford A. Conklin (right) inspects workmanship on a waste water treatment system at Camp Shorabak, an Afghan National Security Forces facility in Helmand province. (USACE photo by JC Delgadillo)*

### ***What is your hometown?***

I live in a small town, Kearneysville, W. Va., although I'm originally from a town in New York near West Point.

### ***What is your job at the Afghanistan Engineer District-South?***

I am responsible for the joint execution and management of 25 projects totaling over \$500 million in Helmand and Nimroz provinces. I coordinate with battle-space commanders, Provincial Reconstruction Teams, Afghan National Security Forces and various government agencies to enable safe and timely completion of construction projects.

### ***When you finish your deployment, what will be your greatest memory?***

That I helped build infrastructure for the Afghan National Security Forces so that they can maintain security and stability in Afghanistan.

### ***How do you balance civilian responsibilities and military ones?***

It's not easy to do. Early in my Army Reserve and civilian career, I put a lot of effort and energy into professional development and earning income. I achieved many of my professional goals, but it put a lot of stress on my family life. I have refocused and am trying to find a better balance now.

### ***Did you use any of your Army Reserve benefits?***

Absolutely. The education and training you can earn through service in the Army Reserve are excellent. I have obtained a Master of Science degree in systems engineering, bachelor's degree in forestry and an Associate of Science degree in natural resources management and conservation. I also obtained a Project Management Professional (PMP) certification. The military education, training and experiences I've gained through the Army Reserve have allowed me to build my military and civilian careers while developing a pool of close friends and colleagues based on shared experiences.

### ***Do you have any hobbies?***

I like to travel and see new places as well as to hunt and fish.